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ART IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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A Class in Public-School Art

ART IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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One of the greatest fruits of Democracy is the popular demand for education. With freedom of action comes the recognized need for more light, more knowledge to enable free action and thinking, to result in the sort of right living that brings happiness. The demand that all may have an



Miss Deem

education, beginning in colonial times, has produced a great army of thinking men who feel that the bulkwark of a free form of government is more knowledge still—but knowledge better adapted to the needs of the mass of people who are in the tremendous majority—those whose ways in life must be more or less restricted by the necessity of making a living. So, for the past twenty-five years the curriculum of the public schools has been a most vital topic for discussion and experiment, with the question always foremost

—“What subject matter shall be of most worth to the developing child. What mass of facts shall he be taught, what problems shall he be given to best fit him for a happy and well-appointed life?” Gradually, slowly, but surely all the old “studies” have been held up to the light of the new demands and the new psychology, and are being stripped of their non-essentials to give place to that material which yields more of mental development and more stuff out of which right habits of life may be adopted. The sciences were the first to feel the revivifying of new demands. Gradually the arts, too, have been subjected to rigid questioning as to their right to persist in the new regime. The graphic arts under the head of “Drawing” have been bidden to stand and declare what they can do to render fit service in the new order of things.

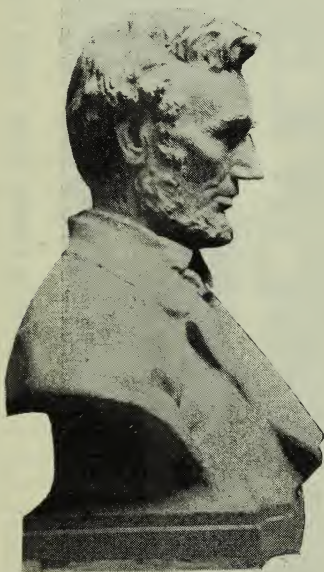
In the old days when material was given to the children to develop some faculty, the reason for teaching drawing was that it developed the "faculty of observation" and that it trained the hand. But the results were so meager, when the high-school pupil was subjected to any test of artistry, that thinking educators began to fear that it was another of those useless fads that have cluttered the busy day of the grade-school pupil. More and more mere drawing as such was found wanting, but as a method of approach to many of the finest things in the child's life, it is beginning to be recognized as wonderfully rich in that content. In the light of broader things even the word "drawing" is giving way to a better term, and the more pretensions but much richer nomenclature of "Public-School Art" is being adopted. This does not restrict the work to the study of the fine arts, merely. The fine arts have their place in the development of every well-rounded life. They add their full quota to the joy and fineness of living; and to interpret them to children and to teach them not only to enjoy a work of fine art, but to adapt the ideals learned to daily life is one of the most important in the realm of education. The power of appreciation of a great picture or a fine building is the power of being happy over things outside of self, of uplift into the realms of ideality, which ennobles life.

APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY

But perhaps the most practical form of appreciation, ministering most to one's joy in living is that which opens the windows of the soul towards the beauty of the everyday phases of nature. North Dakota is over arched by a sky of wondrous colors, so various and changing as to be a source of constant joy to the prairie dweller whose appreciation of color has been trained systematically.

The color sense is like the "ear for music"—it develops by training. It has often been noticed that young people have lived to adulthood on the open prairie without any comprehension of the beauties of a sunset sky. All their lives this almost daily panorama of beauty had been spread before their eyes. After a little training the color sense has been developed until every sense becomes a joyful experience. The loveliness of the plowed field, of the colorful wheat, of the varying strips of

color that make up the prairie landscape, adds to the life of the farmer a pleasure that by which the practical joy of finished work and fine crops and good bank accounts is much enhanced. These latter may be taken from him, but nothing can deprive him of what he has experienced each day as he worked. A lad from the art class came back to school from a six weeks' threshing experience, and was asked what kind of a time he had had. He answered enthusiastically—"O Great! Everything was so beautiful! I kept thinking about it all the time! The other fellows in the crew thought I was nutty—I talked so much about how beautiful everything was. But after a while I got them to see what I saw too, and they used to talk about sunsets every night." One cannot feel that his art training was not educative, if it added so much to his joy in everyday work.

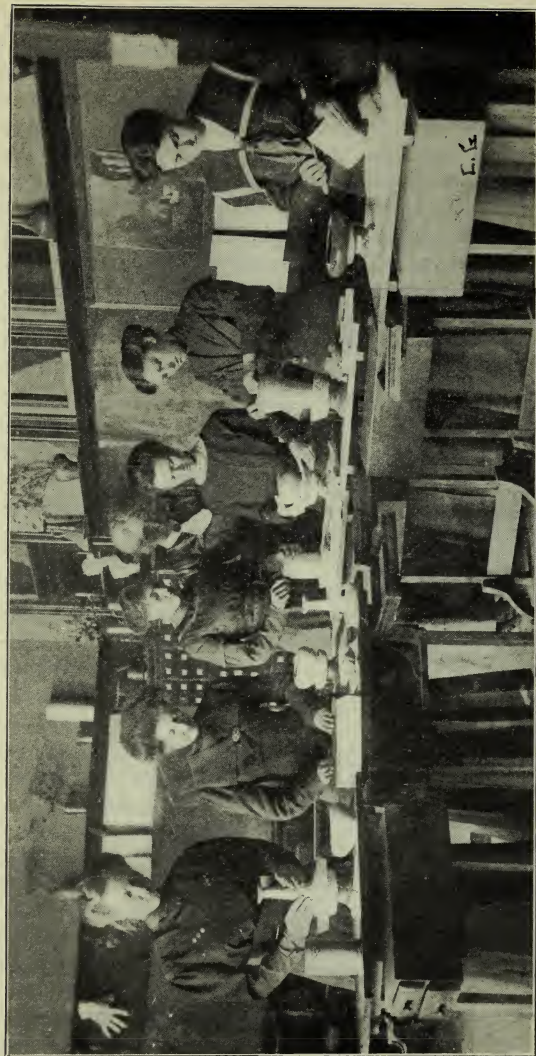


Fjelde's Bust of Lincoln

Done by Paul Fjelde, a student in the Art Department in 1913, and Presented by the Norwegian People of North Dakota the People of Norway, in Christiania, in 1914.

But it does more. While the student is taught that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever," he is led to see how life may be made more interesting and orderly if he demands that his surroundings are beautiful

He learns to distinguish between beautiful and un-beautiful things. The course in design keeps continually before his mind the great laws of composition by which works of art from the most simple bit of household furniture to the great Parthenon are governed. He learns through making various designs to be applied, the principles of all decorative art. He learns respect for simplicity and honesty of line rather than



A Class in Pottery Work at the Normal School

over-elaboration and profuse ornateness. He sees the difference between the fine and dignified and restrained, and the ugly and pretentious building.

HOUSE PLANNING

Then there is the matter of this own home upon which rests the strength of American democracy, which expresses the family life that is lived within the house, where the ideals and standards of living bring the development of all members of the family. How can it be beautifully built, what considerations govern the building of a beautiful home—cost, location, etc.? He is taught to plan the interior with an intelligent thought for the utmost convenience, and comfort, with the elimination of unnecessary and unbeautiful details; and the exterior, with harmonious relation to his location, surroundings, and to make it a matter of beautifully-ordered designs in itself. He learns what to demand of the furnishings of a home of any sort so that when he establishes his home he may do it knowingly.

CIVIC ART

He is led to consider that a whole community is enriched by one beautiful home and how essential community interest in beautiful building is to the aesthetic welfare of a group of people. The thought of beautifying private and public grounds leads him to some fundamental laws of good planting—landscape gardening, and the value of cooperation in obtaining these ends. He becomes familiar with public enterprise along these lines, and establishes standards of civic decorative schemes. In our own state nothing seems more essential than that we learn, before we go farther, to build our towns more attractively. The bleakness and unattractiveness of the average prairie town makes many a passing traveler feel with the famous George Kennan that "North Dakota is the Siberia of America." A little more artistic planning of buildings, and providing for planting and parking, would, in a large measure, remove the impression of bleakness and poverty, and prove of tremendous economic value to the state. And no phase of public-school art is more important than this, that we train children to think of their problems as part of a larger community whole which is dependent on individual cooperation.

HOUSE DECORATION

Household decoration comes to take its place with the work of the home economics department, and to apply the principles of art to guide in furnishing a home which shall produce an environment of harmony, of beauty of form, line, and color. The girl of today should have a fund of information along these lines that will make her surround herself and her family with the colors and forms that tend to promote an atmosphere of refinement and well-ordered living. Too often the furnishing of a home has been the result of whimsical uneducated taste, and the results have not been pleasant. The study of good styles of historic furniture, as surely as the study of fine pictures and statuary, is a study of fine arts, and is most helpful in establishing a criterion of good taste.

DRESS DESIGN

The subject of dress is one of importance. Our garments are not a meaningless covering. They speak loudly for us or against us to the most casual observer. Dress design is first of all an art problem and not only deserves but demands attention to itself in any democratic system of art education. Every woman ought to be taught how to clothe herself so as to make herself more beautiful, instead of less so, and how to buy most economically to this end. Here again the art and the home economics departments join hands. "Dress yourself beautifully," says Ruskin. "Also you are to dress as many other people as you can and to teach them how to dress, if they do not know, and to consider any ill-dressed woman or child whom you see anywhere as a personal disgrace, and to get at them somehow, until everybody is as beautifully dressed as birds." This is an exhortation of particular importance to our students at the Normal School.

Again Ruskin says: "Good taste is essentially a moral quality." Taste is not only a part and an index of morality, it is the only morality. The first, last and closest trial question to any living creature is 'What do you like?' And the entire object of education is to make people not merely do the right things, but enjoy the right things. What we like determines what we are, and to teach taste is inevitably to form character." This can hardly be gainsaid, and,

judged from this standpoint, no department of school work is more productive of educative results in the largest sense than that of public-school art.

THE MUNSELL COLOR SYSTEM

People of all sorts are very strongly influenced by color, but until very recently nothing but the vaguest sort of generalizations regarding its best use had been in the hands of the art teacher. Students were left to their own whims as to its selection, and no criticism more constructive than "That's good," or "That's bad" has been given. There seemed to be no exact science controlling its use, and art teachers everywhere deplored the fact. Finally, Mr. A. H. Munsell, of the Boston School of Technology, following up the abstruse work of Helmholtz, and Professor Rood of Columbia, has given what seemed to be a complete scientific development of a measured color system. It is accurate, easy to learn even for children, and of very great value not only for decorative, but for pure art. It formulates certain principles and measurements by which the correct use of color may be learned by even the least artistic. So convenient, complete, and truthful an arrangement of the content of the color sense is of great aid, first, in the observation, and thereafter, in the appreciation of colors and their harmonies. It affords also an exact nomenclature for color which is being adopted by leading manufacturers of color products, such as the Cheney Silk Company and others. Its final adoption for all commercial purposes seems only a matter of a short time, because it gives universal and accurate names for every known color used in the trade world. "Sky blue," "cerise," "taupe," and all the other color names in common parlance are so very indefinite and often changed. The Munsell color names are absolutely definite, accurate and scientific. Color work in the Normal School is based on this system, and the work never fails to arouse the enthusiastic interest of the students.

THE CROSS DRAWING GLASS

An invention of more than usual importance has come into use in the Normal School art classes as an instrument for training the eye to see the eccentricities of perspective, and of light and shade known as value. To be able to see correctly the facts of proportion and foreshortening is all there

is to drawing, which depends on the eye, rather than the hand. This drawing glass, the invention of Mr. Auson K. Cross, a drawing teacher in one of the great art schools of America, is really a device by which any one can teach himself to draw as well as the professional artist. By it he is enabled to criticize his own work and train his own power of seeing. After one term of faithful use of the glass, the students have conquered the big difficulties and are able to draw correctly and intelligently.

The glass simplifies the teaching of drawing where it has to be done by the small-town teacher or the rural-school teacher without the help of a specialist. With its aid she is able to make sure the work of the children is right or wrong and to help them correct their work.

It is a very simple device and the wonder is that it has not been thought of before. As it is becoming known, it has the endorsement of many of the great educators and is making more friends constantly. It will some day become a necessity in every schoolroom.

THE COMPLETE COURSE

The work in art as it is conducted at the State Normal School is designed to give students pursuing the elementary curricula, first, the power of seeking and interpreting the beauty of the familiar world, and a knowledge of practical aesthetics and established laws of good taste in the appointments of everyday life; second, a practical knowledge of perspective and color.

Advanced courses pursued in this department give students the required training to fit them as special teachers and supervisors of public-school art. Such students are offered three terms of work in the training of the hand and eye, three terms of work in methods of teaching, and three terms in applied design, in addition to the elementary work. The curriculum follows:

First Year

Fall	Winter	Spring
Psychology 41	Psychology 42	Psychology 43
Education 41a	Language 41b	Science 41a
Art 13	and	Art 23
Manual Train. 41j	Art 22	Manual Train. 43c
Art 41	Manual Train. 42c	Art 43
Physical Educa- tion 41	Art. 42	Physical Educa- tion 43
	Physical Educa- tion 42	

Second Year

Education 41	Education 42	Education 43
Art 51a	Art 52a	Art 53a
Art 51d.	Art 52d	Art 53d
Language 41a	History 41a	Mathematics 41a
Teaching	Teaching	Teaching
Thesis	Thesis	Thesis

For a complete description of each subject in this curriculum, as well as other valuable and interesting information about the State Normal School the prospective student is urged to consult the general catalog, sent free upon request. Address the Registrar, State Normal School, Valley City, North Dakota.



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WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SAYS ABOUT ATTENDING SCHOOL AT THIS TIME

(The following statement is taken from Teachers' Leaflet No. 3 of April, 1918, published by the Bureau of Education of the Department of the Interior, under the above caption.)

"The entire spirit of the administration in Washington, is and has been from the beginning, that the war should in no way be used as an excuse for giving the children of the country any less education, in quantity or quality, than they otherwise would have had, but, on the contrary, that the schools should do everything possible to increase their efficiency, to the end that the children now in the schools may at the conclusion of their course be even better qualified than ever before to take up the duties and responsibilities of life. Both the present demands of the war emergency and the prospective demands of the necessary readjustments inevitable to follow emphasize the need of providing in full measure for the education of all the people. . . . Boys and girls should be urged, as a patriotic duty, to remain in school to the completion of the high school course, and in increasing numbers to enter upon college and university courses, especially in technical and scientific lines, and normal courses to meet the great need for trained men and women. —Letter to Secretary Lane, July 20, 1917.)

Later the President again expressed his "very urgent concern that none of the educational processes of the country should be interrupted any more than is absolutely unavoidable during the war." (Jan. 18, 1918, letter to the Department of Superintendence, N. E. A.)